

MYTH VS. FACT ON THE CNCS TRANSFORMATION AND SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

In June 2018, the CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) announced a comprehensive plan to make improvements to better serve our customers, meet community needs, and position national service for greater impact and growth. Developed after months of review and incorporating ideas from a wide range of stakeholders, the CNCS [Transformation and Sustainability Plan](#) outlines specific steps the agency will take to:

- Ensure our core business functions are accountable and effective.
- Make it easier for organizations to access our resources and individuals to participate in our programs.
- Strengthen our impact in communities by prioritizing evidence-based models.
- Align our workforce and workplaces to better serve our customers, meet evolving needs, and ensure efficient use of public funds.

More information is available at [NationalService.gov/Transformation](https://www.nationalservice.gov/transformation).

MYTH: CNCS did not consult with Congress, stakeholders, or the public before launching the plan.

FACT: The Transformation and Sustainability Plan was developed following a year of intensive review of our agency's operations and programs. That process took into account a wide range of ideas and recommendations from staff, grantees, sponsors, national service members, the Office of Management and Budget, Congress, the CNCS Office of the Inspector General, and the Government Accountability Office, as well as many years of CNCS evaluations and reports that noted the need for our agency to implement significant changes to how we conduct business. In addition, we received further feedback from Congress during an oversight hearing held in April of 2018, as well as through other informal meetings. Most of the goals that comprise the Transformation and Sustainability Plan were originally envisioned in prior administrations.

Since the announcement of the plan in June 2018, our CEO and senior leadership have spent additional months listening to and gathering feedback from Members of Congress, grant recipients, project sponsors, stakeholders, and agency staff across the country. More than 500 people attended CNCS's seven in-person and teleconference listening sessions in summer 2018, and the agency received written comments from more than 260 individuals and organizations. We have also met with more than 70 Members of Congress or their staff about the plan. We continue to seek input from grantees, project sponsors, and other stakeholders to inform our ongoing implementation of the plan, and many of the items we have implemented in the plan are responsive to years of feedback from grantees and other interested stakeholders.

This input has enabled us to hear a multitude of perspectives across all six goals of the plan and has informed our decision making and implementation. Examples of feedback we incorporated includes streamlining our grant application, creating a predictable way for non-profit organizations to access AmeriCorps VISTA through the quarterly concept papers, and making it easier for grantees and project sponsors to conduct compliant criminal history checks by facilitating an optional vendor tool that can do so for them. Additionally, CNCS will create specialty portfolio manager positions to support unique relationships that may require specialized skillsets, such as supporting our vulnerable populations and tribal grantees and sponsors; CNCS's new regional office organizational structure benefits from

recommendations made by national service stakeholders; and CNCS's focus on staff training and development is responsive to the themes we heard throughout the many input sessions.

MYTH: The Transformation and Sustainability Plan's ultimate goal is to weaken CNCS or eliminate programs.

FACT: The purpose of the Transformation and Sustainability Plan is to achieve long-term sustainability, grow national service programs, and increase their impact. By finally addressing some of the long-standing concerns raised by Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, internal reports and evaluations, and the CNCS Inspector General about our operations and performance, we are preparing CNCS for a stronger and healthier future. CNCS is 25 years old this year and, in order to address the changing needs of the communities we serve, we must evolve as well. None of the changes in the plan take away from the programs, funds, or national service participants going to states and communities.

MYTH: CNCS's new regional field structure will reduce the attention to state and local needs, including rural and tribal areas.

FACT: CNCS has always supported a grant process that recognizes the uniqueness of the communities we serve. We will continue to support grantees and project sponsors of all sizes and all locations to address their communities' challenges utilizing national service resources. Like we do today, CNCS staff will travel as needed to meet in person with grantees or sponsors, provide trainings, do monitoring visits or see projects, including in rural and tribal areas. National service prioritizes addressing local needs through the leadership of our community partners and that will not change. The more-balanced workloads for regional staff will lead to more consistent and higher levels of service for grantees, sponsors, and communities, and ensure that investments go where they're needed rather than where we have staff capacity.

MYTH: As CNCS transitions to its new regional structure, there will be a gap in service.

FACT: There will be no gap in service. Additionally, CNCS's implementation timeline ensures there is staff overlap, if needed, during the transition to the new regional offices and new Portfolio Manager roles. Organizations should continue to work with their existing program officer(s) and grant officer(s) through the time that CNCS's new regional offices are established. CNCS's field staff will telework until the new regional offices are stood up. This is consistent with the way many CNCS field staff already work – teleworking approximately 20-40 percent of their work week. The transition to the new Portfolio Manager will happen between September 2019 and June 2020, with the specific timing based on the area of the country. We will continue to communicate regularly with grantees, sponsors, and partners about upcoming changes to ensure a smooth transition.

MYTH: The new regional office locations were selected randomly with no thought to service delivery.

FACT: To select regional office locations, CNCS established a working group comprised of diverse members of staff to develop data, analysis, and options to senior management for regional field office locations. The working group's process entailed the following:

- With broad staff input, the group determined the criteria most important to CNCS for its regional office locations. The group aligned on four broad categories of criteria including a location's (a) talent pipeline; (b) accessibility to CNCS's portfolio of grant and project investments; (c) cost of staff and cost of office space; and (d) quality of life.
- After collecting data for each criteria to assess region composition and the strength of locations, the working group composed regional map options ranging from five to 10 regions, attempting to define maps with balanced regions based on CNCS's investment portfolio, U.S. population, U.S. population in poverty, and landmass coverage.
- For each regional map option, the working group assessed the metropolitan region locations within each region against one another based on the identified criteria to compare and rank locations.

MYTH: The change to a regional structure will be funded by program cuts or improper allocation of funds.

FACT: The costs of transitioning to the regional office structure will be paid for using CNCS's Salaries and Expenditures appropriation, in the same way the agency has historically handled expenses related to office moves or refurbishments. Program funds are not impacted by the change to a regional structure.

It is important to note that to maintain our 46 state offices over the coming two years and beyond, CNCS anticipates significant cost increases due to expiring office leases and a GSA-required upgrade of the information technology platform in all federal government office spaces. If our agency maintained the status quo with 46 offices, CNCS will need to make cuts in other areas of its budget to manage expense increases. The changes CNCS proposes will help us minimize those cost increases and, more importantly, position CNCS with a better operating model that enables us to provide improved and more consistent service, as well as career ladders for staff.

MYTH: With the closure of state office spaces that is happening between May 1 and July 1, 2019, there will be a loss of support and service to grantees and sponsor organizations.

FACT: To support the transition to the new regional offices, CNCS is closing many of its existing state offices between May 1 and July 1, 2019. This timeline enables CNCS to support an orderly wind-down of its state office spaces and an orderly standup of the new regional offices, which will begin in September 2019. Additionally, CNCS will be able to utilize the temporary rent savings to support the additional cost of staff overlap, if needed, during the transition to the new regional offices and new Portfolio Manager roles.

Current state office staff will transition to full-time telework until the new regional offices are established. This is consistent with the way many CNCS field staff already work for part of their work

week. During this time, staff will continue to support grantees and sponsor organizations the same way they do today, including travel for site visits, monitoring and other needs.

MYTH: *Implementation of the Transformation and Sustainability Plan is being rushed.*

FACT: The plan addresses many longstanding recommendations and long-overdue improvements to better serve our customers, meet community needs, and position national service for greater impact and growth. Most of the goals that comprise the Transformation and Sustainability Plan were originally envisioned in prior administrations.

Most of the recommendations comprising the plan were developed by a task force of CNCS career employees two years ago – a process that entailed intensive review of our agency’s operations and programs. That process took into account a wide range of ideas and recommendations from staff, grantees, sponsors, national service members, the Office of Management and Budget, Congress, the CNCS Office of the Inspector General, and the Government Accountability Office, as well as many years of CNCS evaluations and reports that noted the need for our agency to implement significant changes to how we conduct business in order to meet the changing needs of the country. In addition, we received further feedback from Congress during an oversight hearing held in April of 2018, as well as through other informal meetings that highlighted the need to make changes expeditiously to address compliance issues.

Implementation of the plan will take many years, with each goal progressing on different timelines. For example, implementing CNCS’s new regional structure and realigned grant management roles will take more than two years from the time the plan was announced in June 2018. The agency will transition to its new organizational roles and regional structure in three phases over the two years, a careful timeline that supports successful transition and minimizes execution risk.

MYTH: *CNCS does not have the legal authority to move to a regional structure.*

FACT: The CNCS CEO has authority under the National and Community Service Act to act on these matters as long as they preserve the service delivery functions of national service programs and initiatives. The shift to a regional office structure does not alter the substance of the services CNCS programs deliver.

MYTH: *CNCS is not conducting oversight of grants and projects during the implementation of its Transformation and Sustainability Plan.*

FACT: CNCS remains committed to monitoring its portfolio during implementation of the Transformation and Sustainability plan. Staff continue to provide ongoing training and technical assistance and conduct in-person visits to ensure grantees and projects sponsors are correctly implementing national service programs. Staff continue to utilize all of the tools available to them – e.g. onsite monitoring, training, and technical assistance visits, regional conferences, in-person training events, drawdown analyses, fiscal assessments, and desk reviews, among other tools to ensure that grantees are accountable for their federal funds and resources.